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ABSTRACT

Employees of Hannaford Brothers Company, Nichols Portland, and Wood Structures in the Casco Bay area of Maine participated in a series of tours at each worksite for three consecutive Tuesdays in August 1995. Each group of employees, some of whom were limited English speakers engaged in workplace literacy classes, planned a tour of their facility, served as hosts to the other companies, and facilitated a discussion around three topics: safety, quality, and education. Participants volunteered for the event and were expected to develop their planning skills, work as teams, budget time, exercise flexibility during the tours, practice public speaking, and improve their listening skills. For most, this was their first opportunity to do a public presentation about their work and their company. Although excited about the chance, many were unsure about the results. As the tours unfolded, everyone's ability, confidence, and learning became evident. Feedback from all the participants was consistently positive. (KC)

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WORKPLACE EDUCATION CLASS ESTABLISHES INNOVATIVE NETWORKING BETWEEN CASCO BAY PARTNERS

ED 426 224

Hannaford Bros. Co.

UFCW

Nichols Portland

WOOD STRUCTURES INC.

YOUR EDUCATION CLASSES CAN BE WORKING TO CAPTURE THE BEST BUSINESS POLICIES PORTLAND'S PARTNERS HAVE TO OFFER

PLANNING AND ENROLLMENT FOR SECOND CYCLE TO BEGIN SOON

CONTACT YOUR CASCO BAY PARTNERSHIP SITE COORDINATOR FOR DETAILS

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SUMMER SITE VISITS 95

CE 077 934

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To: Company Representatives at Wood Structures, Nichols Portland, Hannaford Bros.Co.
From: Steve McFarland, Greg Williams, Karla Sigel, Gary Potter
Date: March 4, 1996
Re: Feedback from Summer Site Visits 95

Sincere appreciation goes out to all the companies involved in the Summer Site Visits 95. Cooperation and flexibility made it easy to achieve our goals. Coordinating schedules and reducing impact on production during the tours was a challenge, but everyone's teamwork led to a successful result for this innovative Casco Bay Partnership event. The visits were an overwhelming success.

Everyone enjoyed the visits and learned a great deal. Learning is continuous and does not stop after a particular event. The continued growth and initiative of those involved with this Casco Bay Partnership course offering will be interesting to watch. Points to consider include:
Do the participants

- Have opportunities to utilize the skills practiced and learned?
- Show increased participation in company meetings?
- Offer suggestions about ideas and improvements for your company?

Reflect on these and similar questions as you review the summary of feedback.

We hope to include the remaining Partnership companies in future visits. Barber Foods, National Semiconductor, American Tool, and Konica are possible sites for future tours. As we begin planning for the next session, we would appreciate any feedback you have to make the tours even more successful. Was it difficult coordinating schedules with other companies? Was having a group of people tour your facility beneficial or an interruption? Would you like to be involved in future tours, including hosting another tour at your site? Site Coordinators will be soliciting feedback at future Advisory Committee meetings. We will keep you posted about plans for future cross site visits.

Thanks again for your commitment to the Casco Bay Partnership. We look forward to continued ventures linking the University of Southern Maine with the Southern Maine business community.

Summer Site Visits 95
Overview

Employees of Hannaford Bros. Co., Nichols Portland, and Wood Structures participated in a series of tours at each worksite for three consecutive Tuesdays during the month of August. Each group of employees planned a tour of their facility, served as hosts to the other companies, and facilitated a discussion around three topics: safety, quality, and education.

Participants volunteered for the event and were expected to develop their planning skills, utilize teamwork, budget time, exercise flexibility during the tours, practice public speaking, and improve their listening skills. For most, this was their first opportunity to do a public presentation about their work and their company. While excited about the chance, many were unsure as to the results. As the tours unfolded, everyone's ability, confidence, and learning became evident. Feedback from all the participants was consistently positive.

Summer Site Visits 95

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Summer Site Visits 95
Executive Summary

Objectives:

The site visit classes were designed to give the employees an opportunity to:

- exercise the skills acquired in Casco Bay Partnership classes within a broader context of work and community
- compare business practices among Greater Portland area companies. Topics included:
  - > Safety
  - > Quality
  - > Workplace Education
- interact as informal representatives of the Southern Maine workforce.
- receive recognition for their self-development efforts.

Course Structure:

The course required six meetings:

1) Participants organized and developed a procedural plan for their host responsibilities.

2-4) Visits to each of the participating companies

5) Sites carried out their own plan, culminating in feedback and evaluation of the entire course.

6) Participants shared results, documentation, and ideas for the future at a celebration luncheon. Certificates were awarded to everyone.

Results:

Skills: Nearly all respondents stated they were able to develop skills such as: organizing an agenda, working as a group, budgeting time, anticipating problems, and making on the spot adjustments to a prearranged plan. Most stated they were able to practice and improve their listening and writing skills.

Interest in Workplace Topics: Many comments reflected the similarity of Safety, Quality, and Education issues among all three companies.

Overall Satisfaction: All respondents found the site visits useful. Many were able to develop new skills during the planning, visits, and follow-up meetings.

The following two pages were given to all participants at the beginning of the course.

Casco Bay Partnership
Summer Site Visits 95

Course Offering:

The Casco Bay Partnership is offering a site visit seminar for employees of Wood Structures, Nichols Portland, and Hannaford Bros. Co. to see operations at other Partnership companies . Each company will act as a host for a brief tour, discussion, and question and answer period about any or all of three topics: Education, Safety, & Quality. If any company wishes to choose some other topic, they are welcomed to do so.

Purpose:

To allow employees of Wood Structures, Nichols Portland, and Hannaford Bros. Co. to investigate, share, and present information about each company concerning Education, Safety, & Quality. Employees will plan and lead a tour of their company, facilitate the presentation and discussion at their company, and bring back new ideas to other employees and management after the three site visits.

Educational Opportunities and Benefits:

The Casco Bay Partnership sees many opportunities for employees of each company. In preparation for the tour, employees will need to research and review existing resources (company info flyers, product info sheets, etc.).

Workers will need to employ planning skills, time management skills, and presentation / public speaking skills when they act as host to outside visitors. They will need to display their ability to be flexible, process and react to changes in a planned schedule, and interact with others outside their normal work environment.

When visiting another company, participants will observe differences among companies, utilize listening skills during question and answer periods, and provide feedback to each other.

Details and Duties:

- Enrollment is open to three to six employees from each company (we want tours to be no more than 15 - 20 people). Ideally, these employees will be from the Advisory Committee, but any employee is eligible. Participation should be voluntary. The instructor, business contact person, and other company representatives are encouraged to attend the tour, discussion, and question and answer period at their company, but each company is encouraged to limit the number of people they send to other sites.
- Site Coordinators and / or CBP Instructor (with input from advisory committee) will act as "facilitators" of Sessions 1 and 5 (see schedule below).
- Each company will need to determine their own policies for employee release time, compensation, travel, etc.
- Any safety information, i.e. proper footwear or clothing, confidentiality information, or general guidelines on the tour should be presented to the other companies as soon as possible.

Schedule of Visits:

Five sessions, each about two hours long (including travel to other sites), are anticipated:

Session 1 - Early August. Date and time to be determined at each company.
Participants will plan the day's events when their company will act as host, determine the roles of each individual, and develop the discussion topics.
Selection of discussion topics is determined by each company; they may be identical to or completely different from the other companies' topics.
During session 1, the participants should also discuss the type of follow up activity they will do, if any, during session 5.
Each tour is short and time is very limited. Be careful to keep things simple so participants do not become overwhelmed.

Session 2 - Tuesday, August 15
Site visit at Wood Structures. Arrive at 2:00 PM. End at 3:30.

Session 3 - Tuesday, August 22
Site visit at Hannaford Bros. Arrive at 2:00 PM. End at 3:30 PM.

Session 4 - Tuesday, August 29
Site visit at Nichols Portland. Arrive at 2:00 PM. End at 3:30 PM.

Session 5 - Early September. Date and time to be determined by each company. Follow up and processing of site visits. Possible activities and final product are:

- Report to appropriate management new and innovative safety ideas at other sites.
- Present to co-workers new thoughts on quality.
- Write a summary on other companies' policies toward education.
- Make a collage of photographs taken during tours.
- Write an article about the tours for the company newsletter.
- Video tape or audio tape a discussion about the visits.
- Present a summary of events with feedback to the Casco Bay Partnership.
- This is a list of suggested activities, many other follow up options are possible. Each company has the option of doing whatever they feel is appropriate.

Summer Site Visits 95
Summary of Feedback

There were 12 participants involved, we received 8 completed feedback forms.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

DID THIS EXPERIENCE HELP YOU:	Yes	No	No Response	Other Comments
Feel more comfortable talking to a group?	6	0	2	Working on it
Develop your listening skills?	6	0	2	
Develop planning skills, for example:				
Organizing an agenda?	4	1	1	
Working as a group?	6	0	1	I've stopped passing the buck, a little
Budgeting time?	6	0	1	Never enough time
Anticipating problems?	6	0	1	Winging it
Making on the spot adjustments to a prearranged plan?	5	1	2	
Help you develop your writing skills?	3	3	2	
Help you develop your math skills?	1	5	2	

Additional Comments:

One person mentioned that by having their tour last they were able to work out any problems that were noted at previous tours. Some of these changes were dividing into three groups, each with a leader instead of one big group in a noisy environment where participants lost continuity and information. They found this to be very effective and informative.

Several people felt good about being given tasks and responsibilities and being able to do these. It built up confidence and let them feel that they were representing their company well and getting experience in tasks they hadn't had before such as leading a tour and speaking to a group of people.

Another individual wrote, "The most important thing I learned from our presentation is you have to know when to stop a topic of conversation and start a new one, so the meeting doesn't drag on too long." This individual learned some knowledge that will help move a meeting along.

Several individuals stated that this experience did not help them improve their writing or math skills. However, one individual said that it "provided information not [normally] available at Nichols. It proved to be a very worthwhile project".

COMPARING POLICIES AT WORKPLACES

The following comments were offered about workplace safety:

A couple of individuals noted that safety is an issue in any company and that each of these companies have some safety problems. One of the problems pointed out at a company was that "more ergonomics and a better monitoring system..." are needed and also more "...enforcement of ergonomics" are needed. Another problem pointed out was that hiring less temps and hiring more conscientious employees was a way to improve safety.

There were a few positive comments about the safety policies at Nichols. One was "I was impressed by Nichols' color coded piping system to warn employees of a hazardous leak." Another commented "the general safety of Nichols far exceeded the safety of other sites, and the safety teams should be given extra recognition.

The following comments were offered about workplace educational programs:

A couple of the comments were that "it was heading in the right direction..." and "...it allows a person to get back into school without the anxiety". Workplace Education allows you to "...wade into higher education vs. diving into the unknown". Some suggestions for Workplace Ed was to offer computer courses, more variety of courses, and more advanced and college level courses. There were some suggestions for getting more students into workplace education such as morning classes and getting more companies involved.

The following comments were offered about the companies' approach to quality:

There was a range of suggestions for a company's approach to quality from enforcing the approach to "...with change comes new ideas and with new ideas comes faster ways of doing things." Some of the suggestions throughout the middle of the range were hire full time employees instead of subcontracting, and instead of negative impacts for poor work use incentives for good, quality work.

The following comments were offered about the discussions pertaining to temporary workers and contract labor:

One person said that, "It showed me how poorly some companies treat temporary employees. Temporaries don't appear to be getting the benefits of this federally funded program, and may be the people who need it most. Most of them don't want to be temporary, and some educational training might be the key to full time employment." Another individual agreed stating, "Temporary employees should be just that, temporary. They should not be used as they are now by all companies as a way to get cheap labor, paid mediocre, substandard wages and no benefits." One other person also agreed stating, "We need to treat temps as a part of our work [team] and give them a reason [goal] to work toward. They need to be part of us."

On the other side of the fence were these comments: "Using temp workers is stressful to full time employees because of added responsibility... Quality time lines, big issue. (But realized this is part of business)"; "My opinion is that the quality of work suffers because of them (temporary workers), but they are need somewhat to keep costs down for the time being."; "I think full time people should come first. Better schedules, better jobs."; and, "I think it is a good way to scan your labor force. If you hire someone off the street [it] doesn't mean they will be an ideal worker.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

What was the best part of the "Summer Site Visits" for you?

Several comments were about going to other companies and learning about the different and like qualities for each company, seeing what type of business was done at the other companies, getting new ideas and being able to apply them to their own company or personal life. One individual stated that he liked "seeing floor associates being involved in their work environment and getting educated." A similar response from another was, "...telling people about what I do."

What was the hardest part of the "Summer Site Visits" for you?

Comments included, "Scheduling myself to be there."; "Our company's presentation was put together less that one hour before the visit and I felt we didn't have enough information put together."; "Giving my part of the tour, but this was satisfying once completed."; "[The] site visit to Nichols [was during my] vacation. It was worth the time though."; "Lack of cohesiveness in some tours, lack of a proper flow from one point to another and inability to hear presentations due to workplace noise."

How would you rate the educational aspects of the visits?
[circle one of the choices below]

I was really able to use and develop a lot of skills...	*3 people*
I found the experience somewhat useful...	*5 people*
I did not find the experience useful..	*0*
I was really confused and bored...	*0*

	Yes	No	Comments:
Were the "Summer Site Visits" a satisfying educational experience for you?	4		
Would you recommend the visits to a fellow worker?	8		
Would you take part in them again?	8		Others should be allowed to participate first

What would you change about the "Summer Site Visits?"

Comments were to have smaller groups, make sure visitors can hear the presentations, have only advisory committee and volunteers conduct tours, and have a written agenda put together from each company visited before the visit takes place, and visit businesses that are closer in relation as far as type of business.

Comments offered about different influences on tours, i.e. management participation, instructors' influence, union influence, etc.

The following comments show a very diverse opinion of how this worked: "Teamwork, we all pulled together and solved the problems of what needed to be done."; "I wasn't sure what questions should or shouldn't be asked around unions, part timers, pay."; "It was very noticeable at our company when the bosses came into the room. The candor became very subdued."; "Future visits should be conducted by advisory committee members and volunteers." In one company "...representation seemed like a power struggle issue between union and management, i.e. lack of trust. This didn't affect the outcome of the tour, but it was very noticeable."

Summer Site Visits 95
Luncheon Celebration 10/12/95

During the luncheon celebration participants were asked to reflect on the visits. The following are some reponses to questions posed during the luncheon.

Why did you choose to participate in the site visits?

--interest about how other companies structure themselves
--curiosity around common issues and processes on safety, workplace education, management relations
--getting the "inside scoop" on other sites and learning something to bring back [to my company]

Did the visit meet your expectations?

--yes: very enjoyable, interesting similarities across worksites in management, interpersonal relations, "body language"
--would have liked: more time spent in discussion, off the production floor and in conversation, particularly on the topic of workplace education and how workplace education programs are set up and functioning across the different sites
--would like to visit some of the other sites, especially Barber Foods for a perspective on the multi–cultural workplace

Any surprises?

--the differences among safety compliance practices across sites, especially at Wood Structures, where safety procedures are new
--the noteworthy "top–of–the–industry" status of the worksites:
uniqueness of Nichols gerotor product and its worldwide applications
leading position of Hannaford Bros. Co. and Wood Structures in their respective industries.
(Pride in Maine work!)
(note from Nancy Martz, project director: What relation between this top–of–the class identity as a business and the interest/implementation of workplace ed. programming?)
--surprise registered by Mary Collins, USM faculty, on the all–male makeup of the visiting teams

The question posed in the second small group was: "What were some of the outcomes, or benefits, for you during your participation in the cross–site visits? (Comments certainly paralleled above points.)

--to be given the chance to meet others, and see what happens at different worksites; to see and appreciate the similarities between worksites; some of these areas include the challenge of working with temporary employees, and having a union.

--to gain a greater appreciation of your own worksite, (I think I'll stay with what I know vs. looking for another job!); and pride in the work you do and in your company's product.

--to see the relationship between the products of the three business – the products provide people with food (HBC), shelter (WS) and transportation (NP).

--to gain an exposure to different ideas that broaden one's perspective and make for a more informed, thoughtful individual, both at work and at home.

One person mentioned his experience in a CBP math class; he studied fractions, decimals and percents and finds that he's able to cope with everyday math situations much more easily (example: figure tips and sales tax)

Notes compiled by N. Martz and C. Walz 10/12/95

Reflections & Impressions of the Summer Site Visits
Casco Bay Partnership - August 1995

Employees of Hannaford Bros. Co., Nichols Portland, and Wood Structures participated in a series of tours at each worksite for three consecutive Tuesdays during the month of August. Planning for these visits had begun back in June, when Site Coordinators from the Casco Bay Partnership had developed outlines of expectations and outcomes. Employees responsible for hosting the tours had met to organize their presentations, tour routes, and discussion agendas. The planning sessions were over, the first tour was about to begin.

Pulling into the parking lot at Wood Structures on August 15 provided the first sign of the importance of these tours to each company. The supervisors had parked on the other side of the lumber piles allowing room for the guests to park at the door. Other employees were sweeping up the yard, straightening lumber piles, and cleaning the entire area. Inside, the lunch room was transformed into a neat, organized meeting area; chairs were moved to form a circle with safety glasses, ear plugs, and some literature about trusses on each chair. It was only 1 PM but the employees had arrived even earlier to get everything ready. They were scurrying around taking care of last minute details, probably trying to fill the minutes so as not to allow their nervousness to catch up with them.

Since this was the first tour, it was difficult to know what to expect. A few minutes into the tour, questions were flying, interest was high, and any nervousness faded quickly. As the Nichols and Hannaford Bros. Co. employees were leaving that day, they were discussing their upcoming tours, making sure they could follow on the heels of the successful and impressive Wood Structures visit. The pride of the Wood Structures participants of a job well done was evident.

Highlights of the Hannaford Bros. Co. tour included a presentation of their Dallas system computers mounted on the forklifts, a video of the warehouse operations, and plans of the company's expansion to the Southeast. In the warehouse there is a certain amount of planning involved, a number of safety issues to consider, and the constant battle with the clock. Each trip through the warehouse is expected to take a specific amount of time and every operator is expected to fill orders within that time frame. During the tour second shift was just beginning and activity was low. During hectic times of the day, however, filling orders within allotted times must be difficult.

Members of Hannaford's management team joined the discussions back in the conference room. Discussions on safety topics and personnel issues eventually led to the topic of temporary workers and contract labor. These proved to be difficult discussions, as these issues are currently some of the biggest conflicts between unions and business.

Participants should be commended for starting on time because everyone arrived early for each tour. The Nichols tour began with a discussion about gerotors, their interesting geometric shape, their usefulness as a fluid pump, and their common applications - many automobiles have at least two.

Each Nichols participant led a small group of five or six people, permitting easier communication in the plant and giving each Nichols person a stronger lead role. Perhaps the difficulties in communication and occasional lack of a tour leader during the first two tours led to this idea, and it was effective. Each tour leader was very knowledgeable about every area of the operation and able to answer every question.

As a final tribute to the participants from each company, everyone was invited to USM for a luncheon. Members of the USM faculty met learners from the many different classes the Casco Bay Partnership has to offer, and participants were led by Site Coordinators on a tour of the Partnership offices, the computer lab, and the USM library. Small group discussions provided valuable feedback for Partnership staff, USM faculty, and the participants themselves. Certificates were awarded to everyone. The Summer Site Visits were over and everyone could reflect back on a job well done.

The Site visits and workplace tours provided an opportunity for the front line workers to assume roles normally reserved for management. Everyone displayed enthusiasm and confidence in their new roles, and feedback from the participants shows everyone had the opportunity to build leadership, facilitation, listening, communication, and planning skills. The tours also allowed everyone to see the similarities and differences among companies and will encourage each person to bring new ideas back to their co-workers and management.

The Casco Bay Partnership appreciates the commitment of each company to this event. Schedules at all companies are different; some workers were released from their jobs to attend while others stayed beyond their normal work day. Thank you to the companies and their associates.